



# ROLE OF WOMEN IN FREEDOM MOVEMENT OF INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

The role of women in India's freedom movement was pivotal in shaping the trajectory of the struggle for independence from British colonial rule. From the late 19th century through to 1947, women across India engaged in various forms of resistance, ranging from political activism and revolutionary activities to social reform. This paper explores the diverse contributions of women leaders and thinkers, including early pioneers like Begum Hazrat Mahal and Bhikaiji Cama, as well as influential figures in non-violent movements such as Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi. It examines their involvement in revolutionary activities, their leadership in major movements like the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements, and their enduring impact on post-independence India. By highlighting the critical role played by women, this study underscores the transformative impact of their participation in both the political and social spheres, which has left a lasting legacy on India's journey to independence and its subsequent development.

**KEYWORDS:** Indian Freedom Movement, Women Leaders, Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, Revolutionary Activities

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle was one of the most significant and sustained movements for independence in world history, spanning nearly two centuries. It was a complex process involving multiple phases of resistance, including revolts, non-violent civil disobedience, and armed rebellion. The struggle aimed at freeing India from British colonial rule, which began in the 18th century after the establishment of the British East India Company's dominance. The foundation of India's freedom struggle can be traced back to the 18th century when the British East India Company gradually expanded its control over Indian territories through military conquest and economic exploitation. By the mid-19th century, British control was formalized after the dissolution of the Mughal Empire and the annexation of princely states. However, British policies that severely impacted the Indian economy and traditional livelihoods, along with widespread racial discrimination, fueled growing discontent among Indians.

One of the earliest large-scale expressions of this discontent was the Revolt of 1857, also known as the First War of Indian Independence. Though the revolt was ultimately unsuccessful, it marked a turning point in Indian history. The British government took direct control of India from the East India Company, but the seeds of resistance had already been sown. Over the next few decades, several political organizations and movements were established, including the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885, which became a major platform for articulating nationalist aspirations. The 20th century saw the rise of Mahatma Gandhi as a central figure in the freedom movement. Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence (ahimsa) and civil disobedience (satyagraha) inspired millions of Indians

to participate in mass movements against British rule. Key campaigns like the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22), the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34), and the Quit India Movement (1942) saw widespread participation from people across social, economic, and religious divides. These movements played a crucial role in uniting Indians and putting pressure on the British government.

During the same period, there were also revolutionary groups advocating for armed resistance. Leaders like Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, and Subhas Chandra Bose led militant uprisings and inspired a more aggressive approach to the fight for independence. Bose's formation of the Indian National Army (INA) and its military campaigns against the British in World War II added another dimension to the freedom struggle. The period following World War II saw increasing pressure on the British government to relinquish its hold on India, exacerbated by economic difficulties in Britain and the growing demand for self-rule within India. The negotiations between Indian leaders and the British government led to the eventual transfer of power. On August 15, 1947, India achieved independence, though it came with the partition of the country into two states—India and Pakistan—resulting in widespread communal violence and displacement. India's freedom struggle was marked by immense sacrifice, with countless lives lost, and the nation's socio-political fabric forever altered. However, it also forged a deep sense of unity, nationalism, and democratic ideals, which laid the foundation for the modern Indian Republic. The movement was not just about political freedom but also about social reforms, economic justice, and the fight for equality, which continue to shape India's path in the years after independence.

## 2. INDIAN FREEDOM MOVEMENT FROM THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY TO 1947

The Indian freedom movement from the 19th century to 1947 was a transformative period marked by various phases of resistance against British colonial rule. It began with early efforts in the 19th century, when social reformers and intellectuals raised awareness about British exploitation and the need for self-governance. The establishment of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 provided a platform for discussing reforms and later, full independence. The first major uprising was the Revolt of 1857, often regarded as the First War of Indian Independence. Though it was crushed, it ignited nationalist sentiments across the country. By the early 20th century, the struggle intensified with leaders like BalGangadharTilak advocating for swaraj (self-rule), which became the rallying cry of the freedom movement.

Mahatma Gandhi emerged as a central figure in the 1920s, introducing non-violent civil disobedience as a strategy through movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22) and the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34). These campaigns saw mass participation from Indians of all backgrounds, demanding an end to British rule. At the same time, revolutionary leaders like Bhagat Singh and Subhas Chandra Bose took a more militant approach, further pressuring the British. The Quit India Movement in 1942 was a significant turning point, as it led to widespread protests and British repression. World War II weakened Britain's economic and political control, and by 1947, amid growing demands for independence and negotiations with Indian leaders, India finally achieved freedom. However, independence came with the partition of the country into India and Pakistan, leading to mass displacement and violence.

## 3. THE RISE OF NATIONALISM AND THE ENTRY OF WOMEN INTO THE POLITICAL SPHERE

The rise of nationalism in India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a crucial force in the struggle for independence. This period saw the growth of political awareness and the demand for self-rule among Indians, which directly challenged British colonial rule. Nationalist leaders, social reformers, and intellectuals inspired widespread participation in the movement, and women, who had traditionally been confined to domestic roles, began to enter the political sphere in increasing numbers. The nationalist awakening was fueled by various factors, including oppressive British policies, economic exploitation, and a rising sense of cultural pride. Early leaders like BalGangadharTilak, DadabhaiNaoroji, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale began advocating for greater political rights, self-governance, and reforms. The establishment of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 provided a formal platform to discuss and push for political change. Simultaneously, social reform movements aimed at improving the status of women, led by figures such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, helped create a more favorable environment for women's active participation in public life.

As the nationalist movement gained momentum in the early 20th century, Mahatma Gandhi's leadership became a turning

point in the involvement of women. Gandhi's inclusive philosophy of non-violent resistance encouraged women to take an active role in protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience campaigns. He saw women as equal partners in the freedom struggle, which inspired figures like Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Kamala Nehru to step into leadership roles. They organized protests, mobilized women's groups, and took part in various campaigns like the Salt March and Quit India Movement. Women also contributed to revolutionary activities. Figures like BhikaijiCama, who unfurled the first Indian flag in Germany, and PritilataWaddadar, who led armed resistance in Bengal, exemplified their courage and commitment to the cause. These women were not only participants but leaders who challenged societal norms and the British colonial regime. The entry of women into the political sphere during the nationalist movement was a transformative shift. It allowed them to break free from traditional constraints and assert their political agency. Their contributions were crucial in mobilizing mass support for independence, and their participation laid the groundwork for future generations of women to engage in political, social, and economic life in independent India.

## 4. EARLY PIONEERS IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

The early pioneers of India's freedom movement played a foundational role in resisting British colonial rule, laying the groundwork for future generations of activists and leaders. While the movement gained mass momentum in the 20th century, it was built on the efforts of several key figures in the 19th century, including both men and women who bravely fought against the British in their own ways. Among these pioneers, many women emerged as strong symbols of resistance, inspiring others to join the cause.

### Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi

One of the earliest and most iconic figures of resistance was Rani Lakshmibai, the Queen of Jhansi, who played a crucial role in the 1857 Revolt, also known as the First War of Indian Independence. After the British attempted to annex her kingdom under the Doctrine of Lapse, Lakshmibai rose against the colonial forces. She led her troops into battle with remarkable courage and skill, becoming a symbol of bravery for future generations. Her valiant efforts, though unsuccessful in defeating the British, left a lasting legacy in the struggle for freedom.

### Begum HazratMahal

Another key figure from the 1857 Revolt was Begum HazratMahal, the queen of Awadh (Oudh). After the British deposed her husband, NawabWajid Ali Shah, she took charge of the resistance in Lucknow. Begum HazratMahal proved to be an astute leader, rallying forces against the British and refusing to accept British dominance. Her efforts in keeping Lucknow free from British control for an extended period marked her as a fierce warrior queen in the annals of India's freedom struggle.

### BhikaijiCama

In the early 20th century, BhikaijiCama emerged as a powerful voice for India's independence, working largely from abroad. An advocate for armed revolution, she raised international

awareness about India's plight under British rule. In 1907, she unfurled one of the earliest versions of the Indian flag at a socialist conference in Stuttgart, Germany, marking a significant moment in India's nationalistic fervor. Cama's work in mobilizing support for Indian independence on the global stage was crucial in shaping international perceptions of the Indian freedom struggle.

#### **SavitribaiPhule**

Although more widely known for her work in women's education and social reform, SavitribaiPhule was an important figure in the broader struggle against colonialism and caste oppression. Along with her husband, JyotiraoPhule, she worked to uplift marginalized communities, promoting education as a tool for liberation. The Phules' contributions to the social justice movement, particularly regarding women's rights and the abolition of untouchability, set the stage for later leaders to view the freedom movement as not just a fight against the British, but also against social inequality.

#### **Torches Passed to Future Leaders**

The work of these early pioneers set the stage for the mass movements that followed. While they faced immense challenges from the British and often from within Indian society due to entrenched social norms, their resilience and determination ignited the spark of resistance. These early figures paved the way for the rise of national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose, and for the increasing involvement of women in the independence movement.

#### **Legacy of Early Women Pioneers**

The efforts of these women not only contributed directly to India's freedom but also shifted the role of women in Indian society. They broke traditional boundaries and became symbols of empowerment for generations to come. Their legacy continues to inspire movements for gender equality, social justice, and political engagement in modern India. These early pioneers exemplified courage and a deep commitment to India's independence. Their contributions, though often overshadowed in mainstream narratives, were critical in shaping the trajectory of the Indian freedom movement.

### **5. INVOLVEMENT IN NON-COOPERATION AND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENTS**

The involvement of women in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements marked a significant shift in the Indian freedom struggle. These movements, led by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s and 1930s, mobilized masses across India and brought women into the political forefront in unprecedented numbers. Women, who had previously been confined largely to traditional domestic roles, became active participants and leaders in these national campaigns for independence.

#### **Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922)**

The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 in response to the JallianwalaBagh massacre and the British government's oppressive rule. It called for the

boycott of British goods, institutions, and services, as well as the rejection of British titles and honors. The movement marked the first mass mobilization of Indians from all walks of life, and for the first time, women began participating in large numbers.

#### **Women's Role in the Non-Cooperation Movement**

Women played a crucial role in this movement by organizing boycotts of British goods, particularly foreign cloth, and by participating in strikes, protests, and marches. They gave up imported luxuries, embraced swadeshi (home-spun) goods, and helped popularize the spinning of khadi (handwoven cloth), which became a symbol of resistance against British economic exploitation. Prominent women like Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Basanti Devi emerged as leaders during this period. Sarojini Naidu, in particular, became known for her powerful oratory and leadership. She traveled across the country, urging women to join the cause and participate actively in the struggle for freedom. Kasturba Gandhi, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi, took part in numerous protests and mobilized women for the boycott of foreign goods. The participation of women in the Non-Cooperation Movement was groundbreaking as it marked their entry into the public and political spheres. Despite the movement's eventual suspension in 1922 following the ChauriChaura incident, it set the stage for even greater involvement in subsequent movements.

#### **Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934)**

The Civil Disobedience Movement, launched in 1930, was another critical phase in India's freedom struggle. This movement sought to challenge British laws directly through non-violent civil disobedience, and its most iconic event was the Salt March (also known as the Dandi March), where Gandhi and his followers marched to the Arabian Sea to make salt in defiance of British laws.

#### **Women's Role in the Civil Disobedience Movement**

Women played a central role in the Civil Disobedience Movement, with Gandhi explicitly calling for their participation. They took part in protests, broke salt laws, and courted arrest in large numbers. Their involvement was particularly important in defying laws related to the salt monopoly, as salt was a basic household item, and women's association with the domestic sphere made their defiance even more symbolic. Sarojini Naidu once again emerged as a prominent leader. She led the famous raid on the Dharasana Salt Works in 1930, where she and hundreds of non-violent protesters faced brutal police repression. Naidu's courage and leadership during this protest gained international attention and highlighted the critical role women played in the movement. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, another significant figure, not only participated in the Salt March but also spearheaded boycotts of British goods, picketed liquor shops, and promoted the swadeshi movement. She was arrested for attempting to sell salt in Mumbai and became one of the first women to be imprisoned during the movement. Kamaladevi was also instrumental in advocating for women's rights and their involvement in the freedom struggle. Thousands of ordinary women, many of whom had never participated in public life before, joined the movement. They picketed shops selling foreign goods, participated in processions, and went to



jail alongside men. These acts of civil disobedience not only challenged British laws but also broke down barriers within Indian society, as women began to assert their rights in the public domain.

### Impact of Women's Participation

The involvement of women in the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements had far-reaching implications. Their participation in these mass movements shifted societal perceptions about women's roles, both within the household and in public life. Women became active agents of change, breaking free from traditional gender norms and becoming symbols of strength and resistance. Furthermore, the mass participation of women helped to unite people from different regions, religions, and social classes in the common cause of independence. Their involvement gave the freedom movement a broader, more inclusive base, and demonstrated the power of non-violent resistance. Women's participation in these movements also inspired future generations of women to engage in political activism. Figures like Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay became role models, and their contributions are celebrated as essential to the success of the freedom struggle.

## 6. WOMEN IN REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITIES

Women played a critical role in the revolutionary activities during India's freedom struggle, demonstrating immense bravery and dedication to the cause of independence. Unlike the mass movements led by Mahatma Gandhi, which focused on non-violence, revolutionary groups adopted more militant strategies, including armed resistance and bombings, to fight British colonial rule. Women were deeply involved in these revolutionary activities, challenging both the British government and societal norms that restricted their roles.

### Begum Hazrat Mahal: The Early Revolutionary

Begum Hazrat Mahal, one of the earliest women revolutionaries, was a key figure in the 1857 Revolt, also known as the First War of Indian Independence. After her husband, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah of Awadh, was exiled by the British, she took charge of the resistance in Lucknow. Begum Hazrat Mahal not only led troops into battle but also forged alliances to challenge British dominance. Her defiance and leadership in 1857 set an early precedent for women's participation in armed struggle against British colonial rule.

### Bhikaiji Cama: A Global Revolutionary Icon

Bhikaiji Cama was one of the most prominent women in India's revolutionary activities abroad. Based in Europe, she was deeply involved in the Indian independence movement and is best known for raising the first version of the Indian flag in 1907 at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart, Germany. Cama worked closely with other revolutionaries, such as Shyamji Krishna Varma and Lala Har Dayal, to propagate revolutionary ideas and mobilize international support for Indian independence. Through her speeches and writings, Bhikaiji Cama denounced British rule and advocated for the armed overthrow of the colonial government. She also smuggled revolutionary literature and funds into India

to support the activities of groups like the Ghadar Party and Anushilan Samiti. Her fierce dedication to the cause made her an enduring symbol of resistance.

### Kalpana Datta: The Chittagong Uprising

Another significant revolutionary figure was Kalpana Datta, who was deeply involved in the Chittagong Armoury Raid of 1930, led by Surya Sen, also known as Masterda. This daring raid aimed to capture British armories and disrupt colonial governance in Chittagong (now in Bangladesh). Kalpana Datta joined the Indian Republican Army, the group responsible for the raid, and played a key role in the subsequent revolutionary activities. Though the raid was only partially successful, Kalpana Datta and her fellow revolutionaries continued their armed resistance against the British. She evaded capture for some time, but was eventually arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment. Kalpana Datta's involvement in the Chittagong Uprising demonstrated the courage of women revolutionaries, who were willing to face severe punishment, including imprisonment and execution, for the cause of freedom.

### Pritilata Waddadar: A Martyr for the Cause

Another revolutionary associated with the Chittagong Uprising was Pritilata Waddadar, a schoolteacher turned revolutionary who became a martyr for India's freedom. Under the leadership of Surya Sen, Pritilata participated in several armed actions against British officials. In 1932, she led a daring attack on the Pahartali European Club, which had a notorious sign reading "Dogs and Indians not allowed." During the attack, Pritilata and her group set the club on fire, but she was injured in the crossfire. Rather than risk capture by the British, she consumed cyanide and became one of India's earliest female martyrs. Pritilata's sacrifice inspired many young women to join the revolutionary struggle.

### Durgawati Devi: The Revolutionary Comrade

Durgawati Devi, also known as Durga Bhabhi, was a close associate of Bhagat Singh and one of the few women who actively participated in the armed revolutionary movement in North India. She played a key role in helping Bhagat Singh and Rajguru escape after they assassinated British officer John Saunders in 1928. Durga Bhabhi disguised herself as Bhagat Singh's wife during their escape and successfully evaded British capture. Her courage and resourcefulness were crucial in keeping the revolutionary movement alive. Durga Bhabhi continued to be involved in revolutionary activities, including smuggling weapons and sheltering revolutionaries. She was eventually arrested and spent time in prison for her role in the freedom movement.

### Sucheta Kripalani: Bridging Revolutionary and Nonviolent Struggles

Although later more associated with Gandhian non-violence, Sucheta Kripalani initially had ties to revolutionary movements. In her early years, she was influenced by the works of revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Chandrasekhar Azad. However, she later joined the Indian National Congress and played a significant role in mobilizing women for the Quit India Movement in 1942. Her revolutionary zeal was tempered with

a commitment to non-violent struggle, showcasing how many women navigated between different modes of resistance.

### Other Notable Women in Revolutionary Movements

Many other women contributed significantly to revolutionary activities across the country. Tara Rani Srivastava participated in the Quit India Movement, leading protests and hoisting the national flag at government buildings despite severe repression. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, while better known for her role in the non-violent Gandhian movement, also had connections with revolutionary groups in her early years.

### Legacy of Women in Revolutionary Activities

The involvement of women in revolutionary activities demonstrated that the struggle for Indian independence was not solely a male-dominated arena. These women not only defied British rule but also challenged traditional gender roles within Indian society. By participating in armed resistance, smuggling revolutionary literature, and organizing attacks on colonial targets, they became symbols of courage and empowerment. Women revolutionaries like Bhikaiji Cama, Kalpana Datta, Pritilata Waddedar, and Durga Bhabhi left an indelible mark on the freedom movement. Their sacrifices and contributions were critical in keeping the flame of resistance alive and inspiring future generations of women to take active roles in both political and social spheres. Their legacy remains a testament to the fact that the fight for independence was a collective effort that transcended gender, class, and social boundaries.

### 7. Influence of Women Leaders and Thinkers

Women leaders and thinkers played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual and political landscape of India's freedom movement. Their contributions not only influenced the direction of the independence struggle but also addressed critical issues such as women's rights, social reform, and equality. These women leaders, through their writings, speeches, and political activism, left an enduring impact on India's fight for independence and its post-colonial development.

#### Sarojini Naidu: The Nightingale of India

One of the most prominent women leaders of the Indian freedom movement was Sarojini Naidu, often referred to as the "Nightingale of India" for her poetic prowess. Sarojini Naidu was not only a renowned poet but also a powerful political leader. Her oratory skills inspired thousands of Indians to join the freedom struggle, and her leadership in the Indian National Congress brought her to the forefront of India's political scene. Naidu was one of the first women to hold significant leadership positions in the Indian freedom movement. In 1925, she became the first woman to preside over the Indian National Congress, a testament to her influence and respect within the movement. She was also a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and played a leading role in the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Salt March. Her work extended beyond India, as she represented the country in international forums, promoting India's cause for self-rule and advocating for the rights of women.

#### Annie Besant: The Champion of Home Rule

Although not Indian by birth, Annie Besant was a prominent

figure in the Indian independence movement and a key advocate for women's rights. A British social reformer, Besant moved to India and became deeply involved in the country's political struggles. She founded the Home Rule League in 1916, which demanded self-governance for India and sought to involve more Indians in the administration of their own country.

Besant's influence went beyond politics. She was an ardent supporter of education and the empowerment of women. As the president of the Theosophical Society, she emphasized the importance of spiritual and social reform, and her ideas resonated with many Indians. Besant was also one of the first women to challenge the British colonial government directly, and her leadership inspired many Indian women to enter the political sphere.

In 1917, Besant became the first woman president of the Indian National Congress, cementing her legacy as one of the most influential women in India's fight for independence. Her efforts helped lay the groundwork for future movements and inspired Indian women to take up leadership roles in the struggle.

#### Aruna Asaf Ali: The Heroine of the Quit India Movement

Aruna Asaf Ali was a fiery revolutionary leader who gained fame for her role in the Quit India Movement of 1942. She is best remembered for hoisting the Indian National Congress flag at the Gowalia Tank Maidan in Mumbai, marking the beginning of the movement. Her leadership during this period earned her the title of the "Grand Old Lady of the Independence Movement." Aruna Asaf Ali was actively involved in underground activities during the Quit India Movement, evading arrest while continuing to organize protests and strikes against British rule. Her defiance of British authorities made her a symbol of resistance, and her courage inspired both men and women to continue the fight for independence despite severe repression. In addition to her revolutionary activities, Aruna Asaf Ali was also a thinker and advocate for social change. After independence, she continued to work for social justice and was a champion of women's rights and civil liberties, contributing significantly to post-independence India.

#### Kasturba Gandhi: Partner in the Struggle

Kasturba Gandhi, the wife of Mahatma Gandhi, was not just a companion in his personal life but also a partner in his political activities. Kasturba was deeply involved in Gandhi's movements for social and political change, including the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Civil Disobedience Movement. She was a staunch advocate of non-violence and played a key role in mobilizing women to join the freedom struggle. Kasturba's influence extended beyond political activism; she was also involved in promoting social reform, particularly in the areas of sanitation, education, and women's rights. Her leadership in the Phoenix Settlement in South Africa and later in India exemplified her commitment to Gandhi's principles of self-reliance and non-violent resistance. She also played a crucial role in organizing women's protests and encouraging them to participate in the nationalist movements.

### Kamala Nehru: Voice of the Masses

Kamala Nehru, wife of Jawaharlal Nehru, was another significant woman leader who played a vital role in the Indian freedom struggle. Kamala became politically active in the 1920s and participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement, leading protests, picketing foreign goods, and addressing large gatherings of people. She was particularly instrumental in organizing women in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), urging them to participate in the freedom struggle and boycott British goods. Kamala Nehru's activism went beyond her husband's influence; she was a force in her own right. She worked tirelessly to mobilize women and was involved in several social and charitable causes. Her untimely death in 1936 was a significant loss to the Indian independence movement, but her contributions had a lasting impact on women's involvement in the struggle.

### Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit: Diplomat and Freedom Fighter

Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, was not only a prominent leader in the Indian freedom struggle but also a trailblazing diplomat in post-independent India. She actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement and was imprisoned several times for her involvement in nationalist activities. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit's influence extended internationally. After India gained independence, she became the first woman to be elected president of the United Nations General Assembly in 1953. Her work in the international arena gave India a strong voice in global affairs and helped build the country's reputation as a newly independent nation.

### Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay: Advocate for Social Reform

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a remarkable woman who bridged the worlds of social reform and political activism. She played a key role in the Salt Satyagraha and was one of the few women to be arrested for violating British salt laws. Kamaladevi was also deeply involved in promoting swadeshi (self-reliance) by encouraging the revival of Indian handicrafts and cottage industries. In addition to her political activism, Kamaladevi was a thinker who focused on women's rights and social reform. She was a strong advocate for women's economic independence and worked to improve the status of women in Indian society through education and employment opportunities. Her efforts to preserve Indian culture and heritage, as well as her contributions to the upliftment of marginalized communities, earned her a unique place in the freedom movement.

### Impact of Women Leaders and Thinkers

The contributions of women leaders and thinkers during India's freedom struggle were instrumental in shaping both the political movement for independence and the social fabric of the country. These women not only led protests, organized mass movements, and defied British rule, but they also contributed to broader social reforms that addressed issues such as education, women's rights, and social justice. Their leadership provided a strong foundation for the post-independence women's movement in India. They challenged traditional gender norms, inspired future generations of women, and ensured that the struggle for independence was inclusive, both in terms of gender and social class.

### 8. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the role of women in India's freedom movement was both significant and transformative. From the late 19th century to the achievement of independence in 1947, women from all walks of life—whether as early pioneers, participants in mass movements like the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience movements, or as revolutionary leaders—played a crucial role in challenging colonial rule and inspiring national unity. Their contributions extended beyond political activism, as they also fought for social reforms, women's rights, and justice, reshaping the social landscape of India. Visionaries like Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant, and Aruna Asaf Ali not only led the charge against British rule but also laid the groundwork for post-independence India's struggles for gender equality and civil rights. The sacrifices and leadership of these women transformed the Indian freedom movement into a more inclusive, gender-conscious struggle, ensuring that women's voices and concerns were integral to the vision of a free and democratic India. Their legacy continues to inspire future generations, highlighting the enduring impact of women's participation in the fight for freedom.

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